

Focused Parenting

Focusing on Age-Relevant Character Qualities

This is designed to be a resource for parents, teachers, etc. to use in dealing with issues in young people's lives. This material would also be suitable for use in family devotion times. This booklet presents the ten major areas of age-relevant character qualities with practical descriptions. Under each major area is a number of related traits to help focus more specifically on the issues that need to be taught to children. Examples are also given from the Bible—both positive and negative situations are cited.

Preschool

From birth parents should focus on teaching the child to obey them, desiring to win the child's heart and gain submission of the child's will (Proverbs 1:7-9; Malachi 4:6; Ephesians 6:4).

Kindergarten – Third Grade

1. Obedience – 1 Samuel 15:23

What it looks like at home:

- Immediately follows verbal commands
- Stops what they are doing when spoken to by parent
- Completes assigned chores/ Age appropriate

What it looks like at school:

- Immediately follows verbal commands
- Follows established rules for behavior in Learning Center, recess, lunch, special classes
- Follows Learning Center procedures for setting goals, completing pages, scoring, correcting, doing home-work

OBEDIENCE vs. Willfulness

Freedom to be creative under the protection of divinely appointed authority (2 Corinthians 10:5).

- David's obedience to his father paved the way for defeating Goliath (1 Samuel 17-18).
- Naaman obeyed the words of Elisha in order to be healed of leprosy (2 Kings 5).
- Adam brought sin on the whole human race when he disobeyed God (Genesis 3; Romans 5:12).

CONTENTMENT vs. Covetousness

Realizing that God has provided everything I need for my present happiness (1 Timothy 6:8).

- Habakkuk learned to be content with God's plan of dealing with Judah and Babylon (Habakkuk 3:18).
- Paul learned to be content whatever his circumstances (Philippians 4).
- Lot made a bad decision motivated by covetousness (Genesis 13:10-13).

AVAILABILITY vs. Self-centeredness

Making my own schedule and priorities secondary to the wishes of those I am serving (Philippians 2:20, 21).

- Barzillai (and others) made himself available at personal cost to help King David (2 Samuel 17:27-29).
- Peter, Andrew, James, and John left their business to follow Jesus (Matthew 4:20 Matthew 4:22 Matthew 4:25).
- Jonah was self-centered, when he first ran from God's will (Jonah 1:3).

2. Respect for Authority – Hebrews 13:17

What it looks like at home:

- Looks adult in the eye when speaking
- Does not display disrespectful body language (poochy lip, rolling eyes, stamping feet, turning away, sighing, etc)
- Does not complain about teacher, discipline, rules

What it looks like at school:

- Looks adult in the eye when speaking
- Does not display disrespectful body language (poochy lip, rolling eyes, stamping feet, turning away, sighing, etc)
- Does not complain about teacher, discipline, rules

ATTENTIVENESS vs. Unconcern

Showing the worth of a person by giving undivided attention to his words and emotions (Hebrews 2:1).

- Samuel was attentive to God's calling (1 Samuel 3).
- The attentive son (Proverbs 2:1-5).
- Son with disrespectful look (Proverbs 30:17).

MEEKNESS vs. Anger

Yielding my personal rights and expectations to God (Psalm 62:5).

- Abraham's meekness in dealing with Lot (Genesis 13).
- David's meek spirit regarding Saul (1 Samuel 24:6).
- The Lord Jesus showed the greatest meekness in coming to earth (Philippians 2:5-8).
- Jonah was angry that God spared Nineveh (Jonah 4).

REVERENCE vs. Disrespect

Awareness of how God is working through people and events in my life to produce character in me (Proverbs 23:17-18).

- Paul and Silas praising and singing in jail (Acts 16).

- Habakkuk worshipped God, even though his nation would be destroyed (Habakkuk 3).
- Pharaoh (Exodus 5:2).

GRATEFULNESS vs. Unthankfulness

Making known to God and others in what ways they have benefitted my life (1 Corinthians 4:7).

- The grateful leper (Luke 17:12-20).
- Apostle Paul's gratefulness (Acts 9; Philippians 4:10)
- The nine ungrateful lepers (Luke 17:17)

Fourth – Sixth Grades

3. Responsibility – 1 Corinthians 4:2

What it looks like at home:

- Completes chores without having to be reminded or brought back to finish the job
- Takes good care of own clothes, room, pet, bike
- Evidences concern for wishes of parents even when parent not present

What it looks like at school:

- Sets goals without needing supervisor
- Uses time wisely in Learning Center to complete work
- Takes home any PACES or other homework to finish without needing reminders

- Abides by the spirit of the teacher's expectations even in new situations

RESPONSIBILITY vs. Unreliability

Knowing and doing what both God and others are expecting of me (Romans 14:12).

- First two servants in the *Parable of the Talents* (Matthew 25:14-30).
- Zacchaeus took responsibility for his past actions (Luke 19).
- King Saul was unreliable and blamed others (1 Samuel 15).

ORDERLINESS vs. Disorganization

Preparing myself and my surroundings so I will achieve the greatest efficiency (1 Corinthians 14:40).

- Creation exemplifies God's orderliness (Genesis 1-2).
- Jehovah's instructions to Moses concerning the building of the Tabernacle (Exodus 25).
- Apparently the Corinthian church's practice of spiritual gifts was disorderly [confusion] (1 Corinthians 14).

CAUTIOUSNESS vs. Rashness

Knowing how important right timing is in accomplishing right actions (Proverbs 19:2).

- The Lord Jesus was very cautious to act in complete accord with the Father's will (John 5:30).

- Esther fasted and prayed for three days before approaching the King (Esther 4).
- Peter spoke and acted rashly (Luke 22:33 and 60-62).

TRUTHFULNESS vs. Deception

Earning future trust by accurately reporting past facts (Ephesians 4:25).

- Joshua and Caleb reported the facts (Numbers 13-14).
- The “3 Hebrew children” were honest with King Nebuchadnezzar (Daniel 3).
- Ananias and Sapphira tried to deceive the church (Acts 5).

DEPENDABILITY vs. Inconsistency

Fulfilling what I consented to do, even if it means unexpected sacrifice (Psalm 15:4).

~Learning to be true to your word even when it is difficult to carry out what you promised to do.

~Lifting pressures from those you serve by consistently fulfilling the project they assign to you.

- Joseph was dependable (even in adverse circumstances) and the Lord blessed him for it (Genesis 39-40).
- When others forsook Paul, Luke stood by him—even in prison (2 Timothy 4:10-11).
- The third servant in the *Parable of the Talents* (Matthew 25:14-30).

DETERMINATION vs. Faintheartedness

Purposing to accomplish God's goals in God's time regardless of the opposition (2 Timothy 4:7-8).

- Daniel purposed to do right at all cost (Daniel 1:8).
- The good shepherd sought for his lost sheep (Luke 15:4).
- Israelites desired to turn back to Egypt (Exodus 14:12).

PUNCTUALITY vs. Tardiness

Showing high esteem for other people and their time (Ecclesiastes 3:1).

- Abraham obeyed God immediately (Genesis 22:3).
- The Lord Jesus' birth and crucifixion (Galatians 4:4-5 and Romans 5:6).
- Eglon died because his servants tarried (Judges 3:26).

4. Selflessness – Philippians 2:4

What it looks like at home:

- Helps care for younger siblings
- Offers to help parents with household work besides their assigned chore
- Allows sibling to choose activity or game and then participates with enjoyment
- Willing to share attention and activities with others

What it looks like at school:

- Shares and cooperates with others in games
- Actively seeks to include students who are sometimes neglected or ignored
- Allows others to choose activity at recess
- Treats others with kindness and gentleness
- Does not form a clique and keep others out

FORGIVENESS vs. Rejection

Clearing the record of those who have wronged me and allowing God to love them through me (Ephesians 4:32).

- Father forgave the Prodigal Son (Luke 15).
- Joseph forgave his brothers (Genesis 42-50).
- The Edomites' attitude toward the Israelites (Obadiah).

COMPASSION vs. Indifference

Investing whatever is necessary to heal the hurts of others (1 John 3:17).

- The Lord Jesus' compassion on Jerusalem (Matthew 9:36).
- Pharaoh's daughter toward baby Moses (Exodus 2:6).
- The priest and Levite toward the beaten man (Luke 10).

ALERTNESS vs. Unawareness

Being aware of that which is taking place around me so I can have the right responses (Mark 14:38).

- Being alert regarding the enemy (1 Peter 5:8).
- God's people are to be "watchmen" (Ezekiel 33).
- The sleeping disciples (Matthew 26:36-46).

FLEXIBILITY vs. Resistance

Not setting my affections on ideas or plans which could be changed by God or others (Colossians 3:2).

- Joseph's plans changed in response to two dreams (Matthew 2:12-13).
- Abraham left his home and family in Ur (Genesis 12).
- Martha was not flexible in her plans (Luke 10:38-42).

HOSPITALITY vs. Loneliness

Cheerfully sharing food, shelter, and spiritual refreshment with those whom God brings into my life (Hebrews 13:2).

- Shunammite woman and Elisha (2 Kings 4:8-17).
- The *Good Samaritan* (Luke 10: 30-37).
- Diotrephes wouldn't receive God's men (3 John).

LOYALTY vs. Unfaithfulness

Demonstrating my commitment to God and to those whom He has called me to serve in difficult times (John 15:13).

- Ruth was loyal to Naomi (Ruth 1:16).
- Daniel was loyal to God (Daniel 6)
- Judas betrayed the Lord Jesus (Luke 22:47-48).

TOLERANCE vs. Prejudice

Accepting others as unique expressions of specific character qualities in varying degrees of maturity (Philippians 2:2).

- God taught Peter to accept Cornelius (Acts 10).
- Jesus was tolerant of Judas even though he knew he was a thief and would eventually betray Him
- David (when in sin) was not tolerant of the rich man in Nathan's story (2 Samuel 12:1-14).

Seventh – Ninth Grades

5. Biblical Security – John 5:44

What it looks like at home:

- Accepts self as God made him/her without griping, trying to dramatically change it (make-up, etc)

- Takes a stand even when friends might criticize
- Shares spiritual insights with peers
- Rather please God and be accepted by those wanting to please God than be accepted by wrong crowd

What it looks like at school:

- Accepts self as God made him/her without griping, trying to dramatically change it (make-up, etc)
- Takes a stand even when friends might criticize
- Shares spiritual insights with peers
- Rather please God and be accepted by those wanting to please God than be accepted by wrong crowd

BOLDNESS vs. Fearfulness

Confidence that what I have to say or do is true right, and just in the sight of God (Proverbs 4:29).

- Boldness of the Apostles in preaching (Acts 5).
- Cowardice of the unwise steward (Matthew 25:24-25).

SECURITY vs. Anxiety

Structuring my life around that which is eternal and cannot be destroyed or taken away (John 6:27).

- Paul was secure in a life for Christ (Philippians 1:21).
- Martha was caught up in temporal things (Luke 10:41).

CREATIVITY vs. Underachievement

Approaching a need, a task, or an idea from a new perspective (Romans 12:2).

- Nehemiah in getting the walls built (Nehemiah 3:28-30).
- Ten spies who brought the evil report (Numbers 13).

ENTHUSIASM vs. Apathy

Expressing with my spirit the joy of my soul (1 Thessalonians 5:16, 19).

- Caleb in taking Mount Hebron (Joshua 14).
- Thomas' doubting (John 20:24-25).

6. Self-Control – 1 Corinthians 9:27

What it looks like at home:

- Discerning what type of behavior is appropriate and refraining inappropriate actions and comments
- Able to refrain from saying everything that comes to mind, especially put-downs, euphemisms, inappropriate topics
- Keep hands, feet to self and not “bully” others

What it looks like at school:

- Discerning what type of behavior is appropriate and refraining inappropriate actions and comments

- Able to refrain from saying everything that comes to mind, especially put-downs, euphemisms, inappropriate topics
- Keep hands, feet to self and not “bully” others

SELF-CONTROL vs. Self-indulgence

Instant obedience to the initial promptings of God's Spirit (Galatians 5:24-25).

- David's refusal to harm Saul (1 Samuel 24:1-14).
- Eve chose what she thought would satisfy (Genesis 3).

GENTLENESS vs. Harshness

Showing personal care and concern in meeting the needs of others (1 Thessalonians 2:7).

- Jesus' treatment of sinners who realized their need of Him (Luke 7:44).
- Pharisees' ridicule of Jesus for the above (Matthew 11:19).

DEFERENCE vs. Rudeness

Limiting my freedom in order not to offend the tastes of those whom God has called me to serve (Romans 14:21).

- Lord Jesus deferred to pay taxes (Matthew 17).
- Nabal refused to help David (1 Samuel 25).

THRIFTINESS vs. Extravagance

Not letting myself or others spend that which is not necessary (Luke 16:11).

- After feeding the multitude, the bread fragments were collected and not wasted (Matthew 14).
- The Rich Fool (Luke 12).

ENDURANCE vs. Giving Up

The inward strength to withstand stress to accomplish God's best (Galatians 6:9).

- Nehemiah endured much opposition (Nehemiah 4:1-6).
- Joash only shot 3 arrows (2 Kings 13:14-19).

7. Reverence of God – Hebrews 12:28-29

What it looks like at home:

- Aware that God sees and hears all
- Pay close and respectful attention at Sunday School, church services, anytime God's word is opened
- Respond seriously to any discipline and correction realizing that God is using human instruments to train me
- Soberly realize God's holiness and judgment on sin and surrender to Him as Savior and Lord

What it looks like at school:

- Aware that God sees and hears all
- Pay close and respectful attention at Chapel, Bible class, church services, anytime God's word is opened
- Respond seriously to any discipline and correction realizing that God is using human instruments to train me
- Soberly realize God's holiness and judgment on sin and surrender to Him as Savior and Lord.

HUMILITY vs. Pride

Recognizing that God and others are actually responsible for the achievement in my life (James 4:6).

- The publican crying out to God (Luke 18:9-14).
- Nebuchadnezzar was very proud (Daniel 4).

SINCERITY vs. Hypocrisy

Eagerness to do what is right with transparent motives (1 Peter 1:22).

- Ruth did right with sincerity (Ruth 1:16-17).
- Judas was the epitome of hypocrisy (John 12:6).

Tenth – Twelfth Grades

8. Biblical Authority – 2 Timothy 3:16-17

What it looks like at home:

- Ask questions about beliefs and practices to undergird right behavior, not to get around it.
- Look for Bible teaching to establish right behavior before God
- Seek advice from godly people with a teachable spirit as they show principles from God's Word
- Do personal Bible study to find principles that will guide in making decisions
- Establishing personal standards and convictions based on principles of God's Word

What it looks like at school:

- Ask questions about beliefs and practices to undergird right behavior, not to get around it.
- Look for Bible teaching to establish right behavior before God
- Seek advice from godly people with a teachable spirit as they show principles from God's Word
- Do personal Bible study to find principles that will guide in making decisions
- Establishing personal standards and convictions based on principles of God's Word

FAITH vs. Presumption

Picturing what God intends to do in a given situation and acting in harmony with it (Hebrews 11:1).

- Noah trusted God and built the ark (Genesis 6-9).
- Cain trusted his own works (Genesis 4).

WISDOM vs. Natural Inclinations

Seeing and responding to life situations from God's frame of reference (Proverbs 9:10).

- Daniel made wise choices that weren't "sensible" to the flesh (Daniel 1:17-20).
- Ahab sought his own advancement at the expense of others (1 Kings 21).

DISCRETION vs. Simplemindedness

The ability to avoid words, actions, and attitudes which could result in undesirable consequences (Proverbs 22:3).

- Pharaoh saw that Joseph was discreet (Genesis 41:39).
- Ananias and Sapphira attempted to deceive the Holy Spirit by keeping back part of the price of the land which they had sold, yet making out that they had given all the money to the church. They did not demonstrate discretion by considering what would happen if they lied to the Lord. As a result of their deceit and lack of discretion, they were both struck dead (Acts 5:1-11).

DECISIVENESS vs. Double mindedness

The ability to finalize difficult decisions based on the will and ways of God (James 1:5).

- Daniel demonstrated decisiveness (Daniel 1:8).
- Balaam vacillated in making choices (Numbers 22).

DISCERNMENT vs. Judgment

The God-given ability to understand why things happen (1 Samuel 16:7).

- Solomon sought this as King (1 Kings 3).
- Rehoboam forsook the wise counsel of the older men, listening to the disastrous advice of peers (1 Kings 12).

9. Servant's Heart – Philippians 2:5

What it looks like at home:

- Looking for ways to help younger children or older adults
- Finding ways to minister to missionaries, people in church, needs in community
- Willing to sacrifice time and comfort to help others in the family or outside of it as appropriate

What it looks like at school:

- Volunteering to help when ministry projects are proposed

- Finding ways to minister to missionaries, people in church, needs in community
- Helping students who need extra attention or help in the Learning Center

GENEROSITY vs. Stinginess

Realizing that all I have belongs to God and using it for His purposes (2 Corinthians 9:6).

- Poor widow gave all she had (Luke 21:1-4).
- Nabal refused to give to David and his men in their time of need (1 Samuel 25).

LOVE vs. Selfishness

Giving to meet others basic needs without having as my motive personal reward (1 Corinthians 13:3).

- Jonathan showed love to David—a rival for the throne (1 Samuel 20:14-23).
- Saul hated David because he was a threat to his throne (1 Samuel 20:30-34).

PERSUASIVENESS vs. Contentiousness

Guiding vital truths around another's mental roadblocks (2 Timothy 2:24).

- Esther persuaded the King of Haman's plot (Esther 7).
- Shimei was only chiding with David (2 Samuel 16:5-8).

SENSITIVITY vs. Callousness

Exercising my senses so I can perceive the true spirit and emotions of those around me (Romans 12:15).

- The little girl who served Naaman's wife (2 Kings 5).
- Peter was insensitive to the Gentiles (Galatians 2:11-13).

10. Lordship Submission – Galatians 1:18

What it looks like at home:

- Seeking God's will in making decisions related to job, friends, marriage, career, college, purchases
- Choosing God's will over personal desires in these areas and others

What it looks like at school:

- Seeking God's will in making decisions related to job, friends, marriage, career, college, purchases
- Choosing God's will over personal desires in these areas and others

JOYFULNESS vs. Self-pity

The spontaneous enthusiasm of my spirit when my soul is in fellowship with God (Proverbs 15:13).

- Paul's example while in prison (Philippians 4:4).
- David while harboring sin (Psalm 32:3-4).

PATIENCE vs. Restlessness

Accepting a difficult situation from God without giving Him a deadline to remove it (Romans 5:3-4).

- Joseph patiently suffered for doing what was right, and was rewarded by God (Genesis 37-50).
- The Unmerciful Servant (Matthew 18).

VIRTUE vs. Impurity

The moral excellence and purity of spirit that radiate from my life as I obey God's Word (2 Peter 1:5).

- John the Baptist had a virtuous testimony (Luke 7:28; John 1:6-8, 19ff; 3:30)
- The *Strange Woman* (Proverbs 7).

Several characteristics demonstrating responsibility, which parents could focus on with older children or teens might include:

RESOURCEFULNESS vs. Wastefulness

Wise use of that which others would normally overlook or discard (Luke 16:10).

- Ruth demonstrated resourcefulness in her gleaning (Ruth 2).

- The *Prodigal Son* wasted his inheritance (Luke 15:11-32).

INITIATIVE vs. Unresponsiveness

Recognizing and doing what needs to be done before I am asked to do it (Romans 12:21).

- The Shunammite woman in welcoming Elisha (2 Kings 4:8-10).
- Levite and priest passing by the injured man (Luke 10:30-37).

THOROUGHNESS vs. Incompleteness

Knowing what factors will diminish the effectiveness of my work or words if neglected (Colossians 3:23).

- Example of Jews in cleansing their homes of leaven before the Feast of Unleavened Bread (Exodus 13).
- King Saul in sparing Agag, sheep, etc (1 Samuel 15).

DILIGENCE vs. Slothfulness

Picturing each task as a special assignment from the Lord and using all my energy to accomplish it (Colossians 3:23).

- Paul's ministry in Thessalonica (1 Thessalonians 2:9).
- The sluggard (Proverbs 6:6-11)

Much of the information in this booklet is material borrowed from *www.characterjournal.com*. Parents, teachers, and anyone desiring to instill Biblical character qualities in young people (even the not-so-young) will find much more helpful information at this website.

The following is given as a sample Biblical character quality study, which is suitable for the home, classroom, or various settings. We encourage parents and teachers to visit for similar studies on most of the qualities listed in this booklet. Be advised that the study below the title is copied intentionally, including spelling and grammar.

A BIBLE STUDY ON HUMILITY

Related Hymns and Choruses:

- Amazing Grace
- Only a Sinner

Bible Verses Related to Humility:

2 Chronicles 7:14

Proverbs 16:19

Proverbs 18:12

Proverbs 22:4

Proverbs 29:23

Isaiah 57:15

Micah 6:8

Matthew 18:4

Matthew 23:12

James 4:6

1 Peter 5:5-6

Bible Verses Related to Pride

Proverbs 6:16-17

Proverbs 8:13

Proverbs 11:2

Proverbs 13:10

Proverbs 14:3

Proverbs 15:25

Proverbs 16:5

Proverbs 16:18

Proverbs 29:23

1 Peter 5:5

James 4:6

Bible Stories

The story of Nebuchadnezzar in Daniel chapter 4

The parable of the Pharisee and the Publican in Luke 18:9-14

The story of Naaman in 2 Kings chapter 5

The story of Satan's fall in Isaiah 14 and Ezekiel 28

Character Definitions

Humility is recognizing that God and others are actually responsible for the achievements in my life

Pride is believing that we have achieved what in reality God and others have achieved for us

Projects:

- Identify the greatest hindrance to humility in your life and share this in a family discussion.
- The true test of character comes in knowing how to respond properly to praise. Create different

circumstances in which your children acknowledge a person's praise with a "thank you" and then deflect the praise back to God and others who are actually responsible for their success.

- Every person who accepts praise demonstrates pride, but those who sincerely deflect praise demonstrate proper humility and gratefulness.

An example of deflecting praise:

Praise: You are a wonderful Christian

Possible responses:

- Anything commendable you see in my life is an evidence of the faithfulness of the Lord Jesus Christ
- I am grateful for some very patient parents and teachers who have invested in my life. They deserve the credit for any good qualities you see in me.
- Design right responses to compliments.
- Examine your life for demonstrations of humility:
 - Do you welcome criticism or secretly resent the one who gives it?
 - Are you inwardly grieved or pleased when you learn that another Christian has failed?
 - Are you unwilling to have others help you with a project because you do not want to share praise with them?

- Choose a major revival in history and study the background and effects of it. What experience brought about the brokenness which God used in each life?
- List various achievements in your life; trace them back to whomever the credit actually belongs. Design an expression of gratitude for those people.
- Read *Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God* by Jonathan Edwards. Discuss the reality of hell.

Bible Verses to Memorize as a Family

Proverbs 6:16-19

1 Peter 5:5

2 Chronicles 7:14

Micah 6:8

Other Helpful Material

God's Promises To the Humble - Ps. 138:6, Isa. 66:2, Luke 9:48, 14:11, James 4:6, 1 Peter 5:5

General Examples of Humility -

Jacob Gen 32:10;

King Saul 1 Sam 9:21;

King David 2 Sam 7:18;

King Solomon 1 Kings 3:7 Psalm 131:1;

John the Baptist Matthew 3:14;

The Centurion Matthew 8:8;

The Syrophenician Woman Matthew 15:27
Paul 1 Tim 1:15

Christ's Humility - Zech. 9:9, Matthew 11:29,
John 13:5 2 Corinthians 8:9, Phil. 2:8

1) Declared by Himself Matthew 11:29

2) Exhibited in His:

Taking our nature Phil 2:7 Heb 2:16

Birth Luke 2:4-7

Subjection to His parents Luke 2:51

Station in life Matt 13:55 John 9:29

Poverty Luke 9:58, 2 Cor. 8:9

Partaking of our infirmities, Heb 4:15
5:7

Submitting to baptism Matt 3-15

Becoming a servant Matt:28;

Luke 22:27 Phil. 2:7

Associating with the despised: Matt
9:10,11; Luke 15:1,2

Refusing honors: John 5:41, 6:15

Entry into Jerusalem: Zech 9:9;
Matt 21:5,7

Washing his disciples' feet, Jn 13:5

Obedience John 6:38 Heb. 10:9

Submitting to sufferings-Isa.50:6;

Isa. 53:7; Ac 8:32; Matt.. 26:37-39

Exposing himself to reproach and
contempt Ps 22:6; 69:9 ; Ro 15:3;

Isa 53:3

Death -John 10:15,17,18; Ph 2:8;
Heb 12:2

- 3) Saints should imitate Ph 2:5-8, He was despised: Mark 6:3, John 9:29
- 4) His exaltation, the result of Ph 2:9

A Word to the Dads

This is a critically important character quality for us men. Dr. S. M. Davis has stated that the most important ingredient in raising Godly children is to get their hearts early, to keep their hearts, and to be extremely vigilant not to loose their hearts.

If you have lost or are loosing your child's heart, then the starting point to begin to win back that child's heart is to humble yourself. Don't be afraid to acknowledge your failures and mistakes.

Some of the most difficult words for a father to say to his child are "I was wrong. Will you forgive me?" But so much hinges upon the sincerity of the parent at this first point.

That's why that last verse in the Old Testament is worded the way it is. Notice the order: Malachi 4:6 — ***"And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse."*** God turns the hearts of the fathers before He turns the hearts of the children.

Ephesians 6:4 says, "*And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath...*" How do you provoke your children to wrath? By....

being angry

being inconsistent with discipline

having double standards

constantly fault finding

failing to keep promises

comparing them with others

not admitting when you're wrong

not listening to the child's opinion

by not having time to talk with them.

Children want to talk. And if it is important to them, then it is important. Why do children give their hearts to their friends? Because their friends listen to them.

And unless the parent is willing to admit that they have lost their child's heart and seek forgiveness where they have been wrong, there will be no lasting results. Be open with your children.

If you've hurt them or embarrassed them or offended them or disciplined them in anger, humble yourself and ask their forgiveness.

The book of Proverbs deals extensively with the sin of pride. Proverbs 6:17 puts pride at the very top of the list of seven sins which God hates the most.

Proverbs 8:13 says, ***"The fear of the LORD [is] to hate evil: pride, and arrogancy, and the evil way, and the froward mouth, do I hate."***

In fact, this verse can be translated to mean that God hates pride and arrogance as much as an evil lifestyle. Why does God hate pride so much? Because pride is deciding for ourselves what's right and wrong. Pride is usurping God's rightful place in our lives.

Proverbs 11:2 states: ***"[When] pride cometh, then cometh shame: but with the lowly [is] wisdom."*** I know of several Christian leaders who have recently been brought to shame. Invariably pride was behind it.

Proverbs 13:10 states: ***"Only by pride cometh contention: but with the well advised [is] wisdom."*** Again, whenever there is contention, anger or bitterness, you can know that pride is certainly involved.

Proverbs 15:25 says, ***"The LORD will destroy the house of the proud: but he will establish the border of the widow."*** This should be a word of warning to Christian parents.

When the Lord says that He will "destroy the house of the proud," He is not referring to bricks and mortar. He is talking about the family. The parent that is arrogant and proud will bring destruction upon his

own family. This is God's warning that if we do not deal with pride our children will be affected.

Jim Logan states: "Many teenagers who are angry at their fathers ask me two common questions, 'Why is he always angry?' and 'Why won't he ever admit he's wrong?' The teenagers resent their father's attitude, and many rebel because 'Dad acts like he's always right and has to do things his way.' Sadly many fathers think that if they admit they're wrong, they will loose face before their kids. What fathers don't realize is that if they refuse to admit they're wrong, they've lost face with their children already. Pride builds walls between people, but those walls have to come down because God says He will destroy the house of the proud."

Proverbs 16:5 states: ***"Every one [that is] proud in heart [is] an abomination to the LORD: [though] hand [join] in hand, he shall not be unpunished."***

An "abomination" is something detestable and repulsive. Here we have one of the strongest words in the whole Bible used to describe the person who is proud in heart.

One of the most familiar verses about pride is Proverbs 16:18 - ***"Pride [goeth] before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall."*** Those who lift themselves up in pride will be brought low.

Proverbs 29:23 says, ***"A man's pride shall bring him low: but honour shall uphold the humble in spirit."***

James 4:6 says, ***"God resisteth the proud..."*** If God is for you it doesn't make any difference who is against you; but if God is resisting you it doesn't make any difference who is for you. And when does God resist His children? When they're proud!

But James goes on to say that God ***"giveth grace unto the humble."*** What is grace? Simply put, grace is the desire and the power that God gives us to live in harmony with His principles.

The way then to deal with pride and to get more grace (more desire and more power to do God's will) is to humble ourselves by submitting to God's authority for our lives.

Verse 7 says, ***"Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you."*** If we are going to wage effective spiritual warfare then we must submit every area of our lives to God's control. Because any area of our lives that we do not want God to control, Satan and his demons will.

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